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## Every option on the table as Vallejo schools face deeper cuts

By Lantz Christian Bañes / Times-Herald

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Vallejo schools could lose up to \$7 million on top of the district's existing deficit if the state's budget crisis continues.

"That means things such as adult education, preschool, class size increases, the instructional materials fund, library support and a host of other things have to be at least brought before you as potential options (to cut)," State Administrator Richard Damelio told the school board Wednesday as part of his update on the ongoing budget chaos in Sacramento.

Already facing at least a \$3.4 million deficit, the board approved in March more than \$7 million in potential cuts to prepare for the possibility of further reductions from the state. At that time, the Vallejo City Unified School District estimated it could have as much as a \$6.7 million deficit or more if a set of proposed tax extensions failed to get on the June ballot or were voted down.

The exact figure of what the district could lose remains unclear, though it has been estimated to be up to an additional \$7 million added to the district's existing deficit.

The reductions approved by the board ranged from eliminating the 2011 summer school program, eliminating administrative support positions and furloughing employees, effectively shortening the school day by five days.

It is the latter option that has been a cause of some contention between the Vallejo City Unified School District and its two unions, particularly the teachers union. Those options must be negotiated, but the teachers union has postponed negotiations until perhaps August, citing a formal agreement reached between the union and the district.

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The agreement stated that negotiations would begin in August or until the fate of a June special election was known and a state budget adopted. The district contends that the special election asking for a set of tax extensions failed to be called, and that the Legislature passed a budget in March.

However, the \$11 billion budget has not been signed by Gov. Jerry Brown, and the state's deficit is estimated to be about \$26 billion. Brown had been hoping to use the tax extensions to keep state education funding steady.

"I'm not seeing what the ambiguity is there," teachers union President Christal Watts told the board and district, explaining that a budget had not been adopted, particularly with Brown's upcoming revision of the budget due out May 16.

Watts also said district spends the most on administrators in Solano County while spending the least on teachers. Damelio said, in general, administrators in Vallejo are paid the lowest when compared to their peers in the rest of the county.

Together, the budget items to be negotiated with both the teachers union and the classified employees union are worth about \$3.5 million. Without them, the district would have to look at further cuts because the county and state would not accept a budget with items still left to be negotiated, Damelio said. District budgets are generally finalized in June.

"We have a lot of moving parts around our student programming. We have some very unique designs that are going forward, and to say we're not going to come to the table and not have conversations is really putting some of our programs at some risk," Superintendent Ramona Bishop said.

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